

FOOD STAMPS

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

IF YOU HAVE A DISABILITY AND NEED HELP APPLYING FOR OR CONTINUING TO RECEIVE FOOD STAMP BENEFITS AND SERVICES, TELL THE COUNTY.

**The law says that all applicants/recipients for aid, benefits, or services are to be treated fairly.
If you think you have been discriminated against, contact your county's civil rights coordinator.**

WHAT IS THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM?

It's a program that helps low-income households get more and better food than they could buy with just their money. The food stamps come from the Federal government. The Food Stamp Program rules come from Federal and State laws and regulations. The County Welfare Department uses these rules to run the program.

HOW DO I ASK FOR FOOD STAMPS?

You ask for food stamps by filling out an application form at the closest County Welfare Department office in the county where you live. The application will be for everyone in your food stamp household. In most cases, your food stamp household will be all the people who live with you. Sometimes, people who live with you buy and fix their own food. If they do, they may be able to be in their own food stamp household. They would have to fill out their own application form if they want food stamps.

You can also ask for medical benefits and most types of cash aid at the same time by using the same form. If you are asking for your county's local cash aid (i.e., General Relief or General Assistance), you may need to use a different application form. After you turn in your application form, the county will set up a time for you to talk to a worker. Most of the time, you will be able to talk to the same worker about cash aid.

If you need food stamps right away because you do not have much money, you may get food stamps sooner. This is called "Expedited Service." If you meet the rules for Expedited Service, you can get food stamps within three (3) days from the date you turned in your application form.

WHAT WILL THE COUNTY ASK ME TO DO?

Your worker will need to know certain facts to find out if you meet all of the rules. You will need to give your worker proof of some of these facts. You will need to give to your worker new proof anytime the facts change and proof of your earnings each month. Your worker will tell you which facts need proof. If you don't give your worker the facts or proof, your worker may have no choice but to deny or stop your food stamps until you do all that you can to get the facts or proof.

If you need help in getting the proof, your worker will help you get it or tell you if there is another way you can show proof.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RULES THAT I HAVE TO MEET TO GET FOOD STAMPS?

Here are some of the rules that everyone has to meet to get food stamps. There are others, but your worker will tell you about them. How many of the other rules apply to you will depend on your situation.

- **Social Security Number (SSN):** Everyone, even babies, must have an SSN. If someone in your household doesn't have one, you must do all you can to help that person get one. Anyone who refuses to give either a SSN or proof or application for a SSN will be disqualified from getting Food Stamps.
- **Live In the County:** You must live in the county where you are asking for food stamps. If you move to a different county and still want food stamps, you will have to ask for them again in the new county.
- **Citizenship:** To get food stamps, you must be a U.S. Citizen, or U.S. National, or have a certain lawful noncitizen status. If you are a noncitizen and in this country legally, you may get food stamps **ONLY IF** you have worked 10 years (forty quarters) **OR** you are a legal noncitizen under the age of 18 or age 65 or over **OR** you are on active duty in the U.S. military **OR** you are an honorably discharged U.S. military veteran, **OR** you are the parent, child, or spouse of someone who has either worked 10 years or has the U.S. military connection. If you are an asylee, refugee or are under stay of deportation for certain reasons, **AND** you have been in this country for less than five years, you may be eligible without work history or military connection.
- **Property Limit:** There is a \$2,000.00 limit on the amount of property (e.g., bank accounts, stocks, etc.) that your household can have and still get food stamps. If someone in your household is at least 60 years old, the limit goes up to \$3,000.00. Your house and furniture are not part of the total limit as long as you live in your home. The individual vehicle value limit is \$4650. If you have only one vehicle which is registered, and it has a value of less than \$4650, it will not be counted as part of the limit. If your vehicle is worth more than \$4650, anything over the limit will be used as part of the total property limit to determine eligibility, unless the vehicle is needed by the household for certain reasons. Your worker can tell you what these are. If you have a vehicle that, if you sold it, you would not get more than \$1,500 for it, this vehicle also would not be counted. If you have a vehicle that is unregistered, its value will be figured differently and your worker can explain how for you.

SEE OTHER SIDE FOR MORE INFORMATION

RULES (Cont.)

- **Register for Work:** Most household members between the ages of 18 and 60 who are able to work must register for work. Some 16 and 17 year old household members may need to register. A single parent with a child(ren) under six does not have to register. You may be excused for other reasons that your county worker can explain. Once you are registered for work you must follow food stamp work rules or your food stamps can be stopped. Work rules include keeping appointments, taking an acceptable job, not changing the hours you work to less than 30 per week, not quitting a job, and participating in an employment or training assignment we send you to.
- **Work Requirement for Able-Bodied Adults:** There is a work rule which you may need to meet if you are an able-bodied adult without minor children. If you are under age 18 or over age 50 or pregnant, you do not have to meet the work rule. You may be excused for other reasons that your county worker can explain. The work rule says that if you are an able-bodied adult, you must work at least 20 hours a week in paid employment, participate (take part) in a workfare project for the required number of hours, or participate in an approved training activity for at least 20 hours per week. During a period of 36 months, food stamps will stop if there are three months in which you do not meet the work rule, unless you are excused. If food stamps stop because you did not meet the work rule, you can get food stamps again after you have worked or participated in a workfare or training assignment, or if you get excused from the work rule. If you stop meeting the work rule a second time in the 36-month period you may be able to get food stamps for three months in a row without meeting the rule in some cases. After that you can only get food stamps if you meet the work rule or get excused.
- **Monthly Report:** Most households getting food stamps must send in a report to the county each month. This report is called the "Monthly Eligibility Report" (CW 7) or "Monthly Eligibility/Status Report" (SAWS 7). It must be all filled in and turned in on time or your food stamps could be lowered or stopped. If your household does not have to turn in a CW 7 or SAWS 7, you still have to report within 10 days any changes in your situation or any change of \$25.00 or more in income. These changes can be reported by either calling or writing to your worker or by completing a Food Stamp Household Change Report (DFA 377.5). If all of these changes are not reported, your food stamps can be stopped. The county will tell you how you must report.
- **College, Business or Vocational Students:** Only students who are working, OR are in an employment and training program, OR are disabled, OR are parents of young children, OR are getting cash aid, OR are over the age of 50, can get food stamps. If enrolled in a business or vocational school, check with your worker.

- **Amount of Food Stamps:** Federal law sets a limit on the amount of food stamps a household can get each month. This amount depends on the size of your household. If your household has income, the amount of that income left after giving certain deductions will be used to figure out the amount of food stamps you can get. A household cannot get food stamps if it has income that is more than the limit set for its size. If you ever get too many food stamps, you may have to pay back the extra amount that you should not have gotten. This is called an "overissuance." Overissuances have to be paid back, even if it wasn't your fault that it happened. In most cases, you will have some food stamps taken away each month until the overissuance is all paid back. The county will tell you if you have an overissuance and how it can be repaid.

There are other rules which your worker will tell you about. If you do not understand a rule, ask your worker to explain it to you. It is important that you understand all of the rules so that you can get all of the food stamps your household should be getting.

HOW DO I GET THE FOOD STAMPS?

Some counties mail the food stamp coupon books to you. Other counties will send you a "plastic issuance card" or an "authorization form" to be used with an identification card to get the food stamp coupon books from an issuance outlet. Your worker will tell you which method is used and how you will be able to get your food stamp coupon books. If your authorization form or food stamp coupon books are lost, stolen or destroyed, call your worker right away. You may be able to get them replaced.

HOW DO I USE THE FOOD STAMPS AFTER I GET THEM?

Sign the food stamp coupon books when you get them. This will make it easier to trace if they are lost and turned in. Keep the food stamps in the books until you are ready to pay for your food. Stores will not take \$5 or \$10 food stamps if they are not together with the food stamp coupon book that has the same serial number that is on the food stamps. Stores will take loose \$1 food stamps.

You can use food stamps to buy almost all foods, even seeds or plants to grow your own food. Sales tax will not be added to the price of any item you buy with food stamps.

You cannot use food stamps to buy alcohol or tobacco products, pet food, some already cooked food, or non-food items (like toothpaste, soap, or paper towels).

HOW DO I GET FOOD STAMPS WHEN I AM DENIED OR NO LONGER GETTING CASH AID?

If you applied for both cash aid and food stamps but are denied cash aid, you do not have to complete a new application to apply for food stamps. Your initial application will still be processed. When you stop getting cash aid, you may still be able to get food stamps. Check with your worker.